

# **EXHIBIT A**



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*Executive Director*

March 10, 2017

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Honorable Gregory H. Woods  
United States District Judge  
Southern District of New York  
United States Court House  
500 Pearl Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Woods,

We write in support of Rasheed Bailey, a successful graduate of The Focus Forward Project class. The Focus Forward Project, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educational programming to federal pretrial inmates and individuals under pretrial supervision. The Focus Forward Project class is a twelve-week course designed to provide both an intellectual and emotional outlet for students as they navigate the stress and uncertainty of the pretrial phase of their federal case. The class meets once a week for two hours and participants are required to complete weekly reading and journal assignments. The first hour of each class is spent discussing and analyzing the book *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah. The second half of the class focuses on life skills, highlighting a different one each week. By the end of the course, participants walk away with a completed working resume, interview skills, conflict resolutions skills, public speaking skills, and both short and long-term goals. The mission of The Focus Forward Project is to provide participants with the confidence and skills to move forward successfully in their lives. Rasheed graduated from the course on Thursday, July 7, 2016.

Through getting to know Rasheed in the 12 weeks that we were in class, we learned that this period in his life was one of reflection and a desire to change. At first, Rasheed was apprehensive about the course and in class was reluctant to share his thoughts. But, during our public speaking weeks he really opened up. In these two weeks of the course, participants are required to share a speech that they have written about an experience that has shaped their lives and a person who inspires them. We learned about his upbringing, his experiences during prior incarceration and his desire to make the necessary changes in his lifestyle to not end up in the same situation again. We were taken aback by his descriptive articulation and insight.

In his class assignments, Rasheed consistently wrote about his desire to change. This is clearly a goal that is at the forefront of his mind, and one that we are confident he can achieve. In the short term, Rasheed shared with us that he wants to fill out school applications, find a good job and be there for his child. In the long term, Rasheed wants to obtain a college degree and be a role model in his son's and others' lives. We are confident that Rasheed will be able to take the lessons he learned in class and apply them in the future in order to reach his goals, both short and long term.

Rasheed eagerly digested the life skills lessons we offered during Focus Forward classes. He has taken a bumpy road in his life thus far which has lead him to his current position. Nonetheless, he has shown us that he is aware that in order for him to clear his path it will take commitment and focus. He has shown us that he is driven and capable of remaining focused towards achieving his goals, no matter the adversity or difficulties in his way. We believe that his completion of this course is a testament to that.

We strongly feel that Rasheed's experiences have made him a more self-aware, more thoughtful and more responsible person, and that he will continue to apply the lessons he's learned moving forward. We feel lucky to have gotten to know Rasheed and will remain supportive of him in the future, doing whatever we can to help him.

Our aim is to give you a view of Rasheed through our eyes after spending twelve weeks getting to know him. We appreciate the time Your Honor has taken to read our letter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us directly at the numbers listed below.

Sincerely,

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